

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
February 19, 2003

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**JAEGER CALLS PASSAGE OF FEDERAL FUNDING BILL  
A TIMELY STEP TOWARD FINANCING ELECTION IMPROVEMENTS IN THE STATE**

**Bismarck, ND** - Calling it the best Presidents' Day news possible for state election officials and voters, Secretary of State Al Jaeger recognized Congress and the White House for signing off last Thursday on a \$397 billion budget bill that would give state and local governments \$1.5 billion to begin overhauling elections in the United States.

According to Jaeger, the measure will bring at least \$5 million to North Dakota to improve election administration in the state. President Bush is expected to sign the bill this week, which will give way to disbursements being made to states before the end of June.

"The level of funding to states in the funding bill is reassuring," said Jaeger, who at one time was concerned that funding for election reform would never materialize. "Congress and the President have shown that they are obviously committed to improving election administration throughout the country."

Jaeger also says the passage of federal funding is very timely since earlier today the North Dakota Senate passed two major pieces of election-related legislation that are intended to be paid for by federal moneys.

"I am very pleased that the legislature has been supportive of the changes required to improve election administration in the state," said Jaeger. "Their buy-in is instrumental to us moving forward and ultimately to our success."

One of the bills approved by the Senate earlier today, Senate bill 2409, paves the way for North Dakota to implement changes that will put the state in compliance with the new federal law, the Help America Vote Act, approved in October 2002.

Senate bill 2394, also approved by the Senate today, relies upon federal funding being made available as well. The legislation directs the Secretary of State and county auditors to develop a centralized electronic database of voters to improve Election Day poll books and assist election officials in preventing and detecting voter fraud.

Jaeger says that passage of the federal funding allows his office and the county auditors to begin working together toward implementing legislation and developing the state's plan to enact the new federal law. The state plan, which will serve as the road map for spending the federal moneys and putting in place the various components of the new federal law, must be completed by this summer.

"We have a challenging job ahead of us," said Jaeger. "Having the federal funding will make our work possible."

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